

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 TRSE-00 EB-07 OMB-01 ACDA-07 AID-05 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 FEAE-00 DHA-02 USIE-00 /094 W

-----034032 131131Z /10

O R 131002Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4585

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 NDJAMENA 2372

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SITUATION IN CHAD.

1. SUMMARY: IN THE LATE SPRING OF 1977, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF CHAD APPEARED TO BE BEGINNING TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF SOME MORE PERMANENT ARM OF GOVERNMENT TO REPLACE THE PROVISIONAL STRUCTURE CREATED AFTER THE MILITARY TAKEOVER OF APRIL 13, 1975. THE MID-MAY SEMINAR OF NATIONAL LEADERS EVIDENTLY WAS INTENDED TO DEVELOP A CONSENSUS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL REGARDING THE FUTURE POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF CHAD. FEELINGS AND OPINIONS AT THE SEMINAR, HOWEVER, SEEM TO HAVE BEEN STRONGER THEN ANTICIPATED BY ITS ORGANIZERS. WHILE DISCUSSION WAS FRANK, CONCRETE RESULTS WERE FEW. WHATEVER THE RESULTS OF THE SEMINAR, THEY WERE OVERSHADOWED BY THE NORTHERN REBEL OFFENSIVE BEGINNING IN LATE JUNE. THIS OFFENSIVE

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BROUGHT TOGETHER THE DIVERGENT FACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, BUT OVER THE LONGER RUN MAY WELL SERVE TO INCREASE THE LCIVISIVENESS AMONG THE RULING ELEMENTS. WHILE CURRENT POLITICAL TRENDFARE NOT YET CLEAR, AUGMENTED BICKERING WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND INCREASED DISAFFECTION AMONG THE NORTHERN MUSLIM POPULATION

SEEM PROBABLE. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE MAJOR AMERICAN ECONOMIC INTEREST IN CHAD. PETROLEUM EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION TO BE AFFECTED BY POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THE CURRENT, GENERALLY FAVORABLE, TREND OF CHADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MAY DETERIORATE. THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF AMERICAN CITIZENS IN CHAD REMAINS THE EMBASSY'S MOST IMMEDIATE CONCERN.

2. IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE JUNE REBEL OFFENSIVE.

A. THE TWO YEAR OLD MILITARY REGIME IN CHAD IS UNUSUAL IN AFRICA IN THAT IT HAS NOT PROPOUNDED ANY POLITICAL THEORY, IT HAS NOT CREATED THE SINGLE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED POLITICAL PARTY COMMON IN MANY PARTS OF THE CONTINENT, NOR HAS IT ESPOUSED ANY ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS DOGMA TO REPLACE THE QUOTE AFRICAN AUTHENTICITY UNQUOTE DOGMA OF THE LATE PRESIDENT TOMBALBAYE WHICH HAD BEEN PATTERNED AFTER THAT OF ZAIRE'S PRESIDENT MOBUTU. THE MILITARY REGIME HAS INSTEAD FOLLOWED AN UNSPOKEN PRAGMATISM THAT HAS RECOGNIZED CHAD'S CONTINUED FINANCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY DEPENDENCE ON FRANCE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME IT HAS WELCOMED ASSISTANCE IN ANY AND ALL OF THESE AREAS FROM ALL POSSIBLE SOURCES IRRESPECTIVE OF IDEOLOGY OR POLITICAL ALIGNMENT.

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B. IN MID-MAY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT ORGANIZED A FOUR DAY SEMINAR FOR FOUR HUNDRED OF THE MILITARY, GOVERNMENT, AND PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS OF THE COUNTRY FOR THE PURPOSES OF CONVEYING TO THEM THE REGIME'S OUTSTANDING PRIORITIES AND, APPARENTLY, TO EXHIBIT FRANK VIEWS ON THE FUTURE POLICIES AND POLINFS OF CHAD. PRESIDENT MALLOUM, WHO ATTENDED MOST SESSIONS, STRESSED THE NEED FOR QUOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION UNQUOTE OF THE WHOLE OF CHAD (I.E., RESOLUTION OF THE TWELVE YEAR OLD REBELLION), THE HIGHEST IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMAN FACTOR IN THIS ESSENTIALLY AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY, AND THE SELF-DISCIPLINE AND DILLIGENT OF THE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONAIRES REQUIRED IF PROGRESS WAS TO BE MADE. MANY OBSERVERS ANTICIPATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION WOULD FOLLOW THE MAY SEMINAR AND, INDEED, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS WAS PLANNED ONLY TO BE DISRUPTED BY THE REBEL OFFENSIVE IN THE NORTH. SOME WELL-INFORMED OBSERVERS BELIEVED THAT PRSIDENT MALLOUM HAD INTENDED TO CREATE A PRIME MINISTER WHO WOULD HEAD A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IN TURN RESPONSIBLE TO THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL

WITH HIMSELF REMAINING AS CHIEF OF STATE WITH THE
TITLE OF PRESIDENT. THESE SAME OBSERVERS BELIEVED
THAT THE OPPOSITION OF THE SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS
WHO NOW HEAD MOST OF THE MINISTRIES OF THE PROVISIONAL
GOVERNMENT WAS SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO BLOCK THIS
PROGRAM, WITH A FEW ADDING THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS
THREATENED WITH DEPOSITION SHOULD HE ATTEMPT TO
FOLLOW THROUGH. OTHERS ATTRIBUTE THE PROPOSAL FOR
A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT TO THE CIVILIANS AND TECHNOCRATS.
BUT OVERSHADOWING EVEN THESE IMPORTANT RECOMMEN-
TIONS WAS THE QUESTION OF QUOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION
UNQUOTE AND, MORE PRECISELY, THE ROLE THAT THE
NORTHERN, MOYULEM HALF AND CENTER OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS
40 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL POPULATION SHOULD
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PLAY IN A TRULY NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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SS-15 TRSE-00 EB-07 OMB-01 ACDA-07 AID-05 SSO-00
NSCE-00 INRE-00 FEAE-00 DHA-02 USIE-00 (ISO) W
-----038070 131624Z /42 13

O R 131002Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4586

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT)

IN 1971, THE POPULATION BASED UPON 1964 CENSUS FIGURES

IN THE BORKU-ENNEDI-TIBESTI (B.E.T.) PREFECTURES PLUS THE NORTHERN PARTS OF KANEM, BATHA, AND BILTINE PREFECTURES WAS ESTIMATED AT LESS THAN 100,000 PERSONS. THE POPULATION OF THE CENTRL, SAHELIAN ZONE OF CHAD WAS ESTIMATED AT 1.37 MILLION OF A TOTAL OF 3.7 MILLION PERSONS. WHILE THE OVERALL POPULATION OF CHAD MAY HAVE HTOWN SINCE THIS 1971 ESTIMATE, IT IS LIVELY, BECAUSE OF THE 1972-75 DAHELAIN DROUGHT, THAT THE POPULATION IN THE CENTRAL ZONE OF THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN REDUCED.

C. THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAY SEMINAR AS PUBLISHED IN ESSENCE LARGELY RESTATED THE PROBLEMS WITHOUT PROPOSING SOLUTIONS. THESE RESOLUTINS, INTERA LIA, INVITED THE SMC TO CONTINUE ITS RECMCILATION EFFORTS, RECOMMEND THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ROLE OF THE SMC BE BETTER DEFINED AND SUGGESTED THAT THE SMC IS PRINCIPALLY AN ARBITER CALLED FOR SEVERAL IMPROVEMENTS IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION (E.G., VILLAGE COOPERATIVES), PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND REORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT SPECIFYING DETAILS, AND, PROBABLY MOST IMPORTANTLY, CALLED FOR THE CREATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OF A COMMISSION TO STUDY THE FUTURE INSTITUTIONS OF THE REPUBLIC. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE OFT-STATED POLICIES OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WERE REITERATED, I.E., NON-ALIGNMENT, A POLICY OF GOOD-NEIGHOVBORLINESS, FEIMTSHIP AND FRATERNITY, AND THE ADHERENCE OF CHAD TO THE CHARTERS OF THE UN AND OAU.

3. THE SITUATION IN LIGHT OF THE REBEL OFFENSIVE:

A. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, WHILE THERE IS LITTLE IMMEDIATE DANGER OF THE REBELS IN NORTHERN CHAD QUOTE MARCHING ON NDJAMENA UNQUOTE (SOME 600 MILES OF DESERT SEPARATE THEM FROM US), THE MILITARY SETBAKCS OF THE GOVERNMENT MAY WELL HAVE SOME POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS. THESE COULD TAKE TWO FORMS: DVISIONS BETWEEN PRESENT LEADERS; AND INCREASED MOSLEM DISCONTENT WITHIN THE ARMY AND WITHIN THE GENERAL POPULACE.

B. EVEN BEFORE THE PRESENT FIGHTING IN THE NORTH, CRACKS WERE APPRENT IN THE SOLIDARITY OF THE SMC. SEVERAL IMPORTANT MEMBERS INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER KAMOUGUE (PROBABLY THE MOST ABLE AND AMBITIOQS) WERE OBVIOUSLY DISENCHANTED WITH

PRESIDENT MALLOUM'S PERFORMANCE. WE BELIEVE THAT
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THE LDCREASED FIGHTING HBA BROUGHT ABOUT A
TEMPORARY SOLIDARITY AND THAT THESE DIVISIONS HAVE
BEEN TEMPORARILY PAPERED OVER. WE WSO BELIEVEJJ
HOWEVER, THAT THE VARIOUS FACTIONS WITHIN MEE SMC
ARE AT SOME POINT GOING TO START BLAMING EACH OTHER
FOR THE LOSS OF THE NORTHWEST. SUCH DIVISIVENESS
COULD CAUSE A RESHIFTING (OR PERHAPS SEVERAL
RESHIFTINGS) OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SMC.

C.THE THREAT OF INCREASED MOSLEM/NORTHERN
DISAFFECTION IS, POTENTIALLY, OF GREATER DANGER.
IT COULB TAKE SEVERAL FORM. IT SHOULD BE BORNE
IN MIND THAT CHAD IS A SORT OF A SUDAN IN REVERSE,
WITH A CLEAR CUT DIVISION OF THE POPULATION
BETWEEN MOSLEM NORTHERNERS AND ANIMIST/CHRISTIAN
SOUTHERNERS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IN THE HANDS
OF THE SOUTHERNERS (A MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION)
SINCE INDEPENDENCE, AND NORTHERNERS HAVE NEVER
WILLINGLY ACCEPTED THIS ARRANGEMENT. THIS DIVISION,
OF COURSE, IS THE REASON WHY THE SMC HAS MADE QUOTE
NATIONAL RECONCILIATION UNQUOTE ITS MOST IMPORTANT
OBJECTIE.THIS POLICY HAS OBVIOUSLY FAILED TO DATE.

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SS-15 TRSE-00 EB-07 OMB-01 ACDA-07 AID-05 SSO-00
NSCE-00 INRE-00 FEAE-00 DHA-02 USIE-00 /094 W
-----039173 131822Z /41/40

O R 131002ZJUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4587

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 NDJAMENA 2372

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 3.)

D. A SIZEABLE PROPORTION OF THE MILITARY FORCES, NOTABLY IN THE GARDE NOMADE, IS OF MUSLVO STOCK, ALTHOUGH SOUTHERNERS PREDOMINATE IN THE ARMY. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF AIR FORCE CAPT. ZAKARIA, A MEMBER OF THE SMC AND MINISTER OF CIVIL WORKS, MINES AND GEOLOGY, WHO IS GENERALLY CONCERNED TO BE A QUOTE TOKEN ARAB UNQUOTE WHOSE PRINCIPAL LOYALTIES LIE WITH PRSIDENT MALLOUM, NO SENIOR OFFICER OF THE SMC OR OF THE ARMY IS OF NORTHERN MUSLIM STOCK. THUS THENORTHERNERS WHO ATTEMPTED TE APRIL 1, 1977, ABORTIVE COUP D'ETAT WERE LED BY A SECOND LIEUTENANT AND A WARRANT OFFICER. NONETHELESS, IN THE PRESENTLY WEAKENED CONDITION OF THE MILITARY, SHOULD THIS NORTHERN MOSLEM PORTION OF THE MILITARY BECOME RESTLESS, OR SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT BECOME WORRIEDTHAT IT MIGHT BECOME RESTLESS, INTERNECINE INTERNAL FIGHTING COULD
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BREAK OUT. SUCH FIGHTING WOULDNOT ONLY WEAKEN FURTHER THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO RESIST THE REBELS, BUT WOULD AGGRAVATE DIVISIONS BETWEEN THE POPULACE IN GENERAL.

E. NDJAMENA IS THE NERVE CENTER OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, SUCH AS IT IS. WHILE NORTHERNERS AND MOSLEMSARE IN A MINORITY IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE, THEY ARE PROBABLY IN A MAJORITY IN NDJAMENA ITSELF (INCLUDING SUBSTANTIAL NIGERIAN AND SUDANESE POPU- LATIONS) AND ARE THEREFORE IN A POSITION IN WHICH DISSATISFACTION CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR DIRECTLY ON THE GOVERNMENT. THESE MOSLEM NORTHERNERS, CHADIAN AND NON-CHADIAN, FORM A SIGNIFICANT POGTION OF THE IMPORTANT MERCHANT CLASS IN NDJAMENA AND HAVE INTHE PAST TWO YEARS OFTEN BEENIN DISAGREEMENT WITH THE ECONOMIC POLICIES OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WHICH THEY HAVE STUND OVERLY RESTRICTIVE, ALTHOUGH THIS DISSAFTISFACTION TO DATE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY CONTAINED. BUT WITH THE SUCCESS OF THE REBELS IN THE NORTH,REBEL BANDS ELSEWHERE CAN BE EXPECTED TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE. TERRORISM IN NDJAMENA COULD BECOME AN IMMINENT THREAT, AND THE NORTHERN POPULATION COULD BECOME INVOLVED AT LEAST TO THE

EXTENT OF HARBORING SUCH QUOTE BROTHERS. UNQUOTE
THE POLITICAL COMPLEXION OF THE NORTHWESTERN
REBEL FORCES LED BY GOUKOUNI, A TRADITIONAL TOUBOU
REBEL CHIEF, COULD WELL BE A FACTOR. WHILE MANY
NDJAMENA MOSLEM NORTHERNERS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE
CONSERVATIVE BOTH RELIGIOUSLY AND SOCIALLY AND
THEREFORE MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO SUPPORT A RADICAL
MOVEMENT IDENTIFIED WITH SOCIALISM OR COMMUNISM,
THEY MIGHT EASILY SUPPORT A CONSERVATIVE LEADER
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WHO HAS AS HIS OBJECTIVE RENEWED NORTHERN/MOSLEM
DOMINANCE OVER THE WHOLE OF CHAD, AS WAS THE
TRADITION FOR CENTURIES BEFORE INDEPENDENCE.
AGAIN, A GOVERNMENT REACTION TO SUCH A THREAT OR
THE FEAR OF SUCH A THREAT WOULD EXACERBATE THE
SITUATION.

4. COMMENT: NONE OF THESE TRENDS ARE CLEARLY
VISIBLE YET, BUT UNLESS THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH
IS DRAMATICALLY REVERSED OR AT LEAST STABILIZED,
THE ABOVE FACTORS CAN BE EXPECTED TO COME INTO
PLAY AND THE SITUATION OF THE GOVERNMENT CAN BE
EXPECTED TO DETERIORATE. WE DOUBT IF US INVESTMENTS
AND INTEREST IN PETROLEUM EXPLOITATION WILL BE
SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY SUCH EVENTS, ALTHOUGH THE
PRESSURE FOR MORE IMMEDIATE RESULTS WILL INCREASE.
PRINCIPAL CONCERNS WOULD BE THE SAFETY OF US
CITIZENS AND THE LIKELY DETERIORATION OF THE REASONABLY
GOOD CURRENT SITUATION IN REGARD TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS
OF CHADIAN. DWYER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, TRENDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NDJAME02372
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770249-0038
Format: TEL
From: NDJAMENA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770762/aaaacbvy.tel
Line Count: 367
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b3f3576c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1878084
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL SITUATION IN CHAD.
TAGS: PINS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b3f3576c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009